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March 25, 2004

U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Education Association's (NEA) 2.7 million members, we urge you to vote NO on final passage of the fiscal year 2005 Congressional Budget Resolution, which fails to devote sufficient resources to children and public education. In addition, we urge you to support the Democratic Leadership and Congressional Black Caucus substitutes, both of which would provide significant boosts in education investments. Votes associated with this issue may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 108th Congress.

NEA believes that the budget resolution should reflect our nation's priorities, and that providing additional resources for public education and programs targeted to vulnerable children and families should be a top priority. The proposed budget fails this test because it:

- Proposes the smallest overall increase for education programs in nine years, neglecting the widespread need for additional funding from early childhood through postsecondary education.
- Shortchanges No Child Left Behind programs by approximately \$9 billion below authorized levels, with most of that gap impacting Title I. This shortfall comes as many of NCLB's most costly mandates including annual testing and highly qualified teacher requirements are about to go into effect. In addition, the shortfall leaves the tens of thousands of schools already found failing to make adequate yearly progress without the resources necessary to improve student achievement.
- Falls further behind on fully funding special education, by proposing only a 0.5 percent increase in funding. The budget rejects bipartisan proposals to move toward full funding, while leaving the federal share of special education funding at less than half of the level promised decades ago.
- Freezes Pell Grant funding for the third year in a row, making college unaffordable for millions of low-income students.

In contrast, both the Democratic Leadership and Congressional Black Caucus substitutes make children and public education real priorities by providing meaningful investments to help our most vulnerable children and families. We urge you to support the Democratic Leadership and CBC substitutes and to oppose passage of the budget resolution should neither of these substitutes pass.

Sincerely,

Diane Shust

Director of Government Relations

Manager of Federal Policy and Politics